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Many “Hands” make easy, enriching travel

***Hands of Harvest*, a guide to the arts and culture of north central Montana**

A new guidebook is helping travelers find their way to the galleries and studios where arts and crafts are practiced in north central Montana and where quality handmade items are available. *Hands of Harvest* maps out six routes from the prairies to the Rocky Mountain Front Range, from Great Falls to the Hi-Line, across the state’s northern tier. Along each route, users of the guide find not only the work of the region’s artisans and craftspeople, but farms and ranches, Native American arts festivals, museums, bed and breakfast inns, – even a bar and bowling alley in Fort Benton. The full-color book, 80 pages, is a guide to 106 places where Montana culture comes alive.

Previously the stops along the six routes were listed on a free brochure, the result of a grassroots effort by the region’s growers and craftsmakers to promote both their products and their heritage. The guidebook goes further in depth to provide maps of each route; directions to these destinations, some of which are quite far off the beaten path; photos of the products and places; hours of operation; and tips on how to prepare for an arts-and-crafts road trip.

Guidebook users learn where to find authentic, quality crafts – woven wheat, the colorful quill work of a Blackfeet artist, oak furniture, decorated paper art, quilts, black-and-white photography that celebrates the landscape, leather works, metal jewelry, and many more.

Visitors to the Medicine River Trading Co. in Valier get to hear about the ghost that haunts the gallery in this 90-year-old building. Leonda Fast Buffalo Horse works in stained glass, beadwork and porcupine quillwork at her studio in Browning. Dianne Hausmann of Fairfield invites visitors into the studio where she paints landscapes in oils and watercolors and creates miniature bronze sculptures. Jack’s Bar and Lanes in Fort

more

Benton sells Linda Willson's "Hometown" paintings on ostrich eggs, saw blades, and moose horns. At his shop in Conrad, Mike Brown sells custom cabinets and other fine woodwork.

Hands of Harvest leads the way through terrain that is sometimes stark, but always inspiring. The Rocky Mountain Front provides a stunning backdrop at the western end of the network for the routes known as the Foothills Loop, the Three Rivers Roundabout and the Peaks and Prairies Circuit. The Cottonwood Country Byway hugs the Missouri River and reaches out to the Marias River. The Great Northern Trail follows the Hi-Line, the route of U.S. Highway 2, from Shelby to Dodson or vice-versa. The first nine pages of the book offer tips on how to plan and prepare for a trip into this fertile territory and how to best explore these destinations.

The book costs \$12 and is available from Cascade County Extension Service, 1807 3rd St. NW, Great Falls, MT 59404. The book is also being sold at Chamber of Commerce offices, museums and shops. Retailers interested in offering the book should contact Wendy Wedum at 406 454-6980 or wwedum@montana.edu.

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SOURCES:

If you would like to know more about the making of *Hands of Harvest*, contact Wendy Wedum, Cascade County Extension Agent, at 406 454-6980. Ric Bourie, 406 841-2893, can provide other information about the book. He will send a review copy to editors planning a feature on the book.